

TG02 2009

NEWSLETTER (VOL. 3/2009)

*Newsletter of the International Sociological Association's
Thematic Group # 02 on Historical and Comparative Sociology*

In this issue:

In this 2009 issue of the Newsletter, you will find news of our Group activities in the 39th World Congress of the International Institute of Sociology (Yerevan, Armenia, 2009) plus an update on the future organizational plans for TG02, both courtesy of our President Dr. W. Spohn. You will also find a report on the June 2009 Workshop of Yale University's Center for Cultural Sociology, courtesy of Katerina Koronaki, a graduate student at the University of Athens.

As always, you will find news of our members and announcements – including the TG02 Program for the forthcoming World Congress of Sociology. I would like to thank all those who have contributed to this issue of the Newsletter. The next Newsletter will appear after the upcoming World Congress of Sociology, and should provide you with an update of our future developments and organizational plans from 2010 forward.

Best wishes to all for the forthcoming 2009-2010 academic year.

Victor Roudometof
University of Cyprus
Newsletter Editor

Up-grading Thematic Group TG02 to a Working Group on “Historical and Comparative Sociology” in Gothenburg, Sweden (2010)

Since the merger of TG 02 with the ad-hoc group “*Civilizational Analysis*” in 2008, the larger Thematic Group on Historical and Comparative Sociology has a membership of over sixty members, an executive and research board, a statute and a newsletter and thus is functioning almost as a regular Research Committee. On this background, the idea has developed to ask for an up-grading of TG02 to a Working Group and, if successful, also later a Research Committee. Encouraged by Said Arjomand and several members of the ISA executive, I as the acting TG02 president applied to such an up-grading of TG02 according to the ISA regulations in March 2009. This application was supported by almost 40 TG02 members in good ISA standing – we needed the support of at least 30 members. Recently, I received a quite positive answer by Izabela Barlinska who told us that our application has been welcomed by the ISA Executive and that we have a high chance to be up-graded at the occasion of the Gothenburg World Congress. At the same time, she recommended to integrate also the ad-hoc group

“*Figurational Sociology*” led by Stephen Menell as a section within TG02. Since figurational sociology in the tradition of Norbert Elias is one of the pillars of historical sociology, this recommendation makes a lot of sense. Hence, I approached Stephen Menell in this regard and he is very positive about this proposal. So basically, all this is good news and I hope that the up-grading process of TG02 will be in the end successful.

Willfried Spohn
Acting President of TG02

Two successful TG02 interim sessions at the 39th IIS World Congress in Yerevan/Armenia on June 11-14, 2009

We had two very interesting sessions at the recent World Congress of the International Institute of Sociology (IIS) in Yerevan. The first session “*Nations at Civilizational Cross-roads*” was organized by Edward Tiryakian and Willfried Spohn and included presentations by Willfried Spohn: “Globalization, Nationalism and Religion – A Multiple Modernities Perspective on imperial and peripheral nations in Central and Eastern Europe,” Aysogu Aydingün: “The Impact of Civilizations on the Construction of Turkish National Identity,” Edik Kyoreghyan: “Armenians, Georgians and Azerbaijanis on the civilizational cross-road: Searching for Caucasian Identity,” and Ewa Morawska: “Immigrants’ National Identities and their Effects on Host Societies”. The other session “*Comparative-historical sociology across global, regional, and local worlds*” was organized by Ewa Morawska and Willfried Spohn and included contributions by Craig Calhoun: “Crises and transformations: Comparative-historical sociology and large-scale change,” Saskia Sassen: “Deciphering the Global,” Thomas Kern: “Translating global values into domestic contexts: the rise of environmentalism in South Korea” and Ewa Morawska: “The transformative impact of immigrants on the host society: An unexamined aspect of the glocalization process”.

Willfried Spohn
Acting President of TG02

Cultural Sociology Workshop on Cultural Trauma: A Report

The two-day (June 15-16, 2009) workshop on Cultural Trauma took place in Athens, Greece. It was organized by Yale University’s Center for Cultural Sociology with the local collaboration of Prof. Nicolas Demertzis (Department of Communication and Media Studies, University of Athens). This was the 2nd

workshop on the theme of Cultural Trauma and followed up last year’s workshop that took place at New Haven, USA. Fourteen participants (both university faculty members and PhD candidates) made brief presentations of 12 research projects which were delving into different traumas-dramas of contemporary history. Every presentation was followed by an hourly discussion which was open to criticism, valuable

comments and diverse ideas. The fruitful exchange of opinions contributed to shaping the final form of the presentations that will appear in an edited volume scheduled for publication in 2010.

Who is responsible for a collective trauma? Who are its victims? What are the trauma's moral lessons for our own time? These are not simply theoretical or empirical issues for social scientists but fundamental concerns of everyday life. They powerfully affect contemporary conflicts at the individual, institutional, national, and global levels. According to the cultural-sociological approach, collective traumas are not found, they are *made*. Something awful usually did occur, but how it is represented remains an open question, subject to whirling spirals of signification, fierce power contests, simplifying binaries, subtle stories, fickle audiences, and counter-narrations. Individuals do not respond to traumas but to trauma constructions. How they come to reflect upon them is certainly a matter for individual conscience, but it is also a massively collective enterprise.

In their opening presentation on **“Trauma Construction and Moral Restriction: The Ambiguity of the Holocaust for Israel,”** Jeffrey C. Alexander (Yale University) and **Shai Dromi** explored recent shifts in the frameworks of understanding of the Holocaust in Israel. The authors suggested that after the Yom Kippur war in 1973 a new cultural script emerged: An Israeli peace movement put land for peace proposals on the table, and a new generation of critical historians righteously exposed Israeli complicity in Palestinian expulsion. Alexander and Dromi referred to the Israeli feminist critic Ronit Lentin who asserted that after the 1982 Lebanon

war, for the first time, the suffering of others, particularly of Palestinian children, not Jewish suffering, was the principal subject of Israeli literary and poetic discourses. The emergent Palestinian national movement played a significant role. A new progressive counter-trauma narrative was projected, describing Palestinian suffering, Western-Israeli domination, and an anti-colonial movement for liberation. It provided a new symbolic protagonist with whom a widening circle of Western citizens and the developing group of self-critical Israelis could identify with or at least ambivalently support.

For the Israeli Right, Jews needed desperately to annex every inch of Palestinian land that surrounded them, for every non-Jewish person was a potential enemy. They had learned this deeply anti-civil lesson from their tragic and primordial reconstruction of the Holocaust. For them, the trauma drama of the Holocaust points toward an ineluctable solution: It is only power and violence that can save contemporary Jews from suffering their ancestors' fate. The mainstream Zionist invocation of the Holocaust trauma drama justified anti-Arab and anti-Palestinian violence in the name of creating and defending Israel. The right-wing pro-settlement variation on this theme understands such violence as an act of defiance.

The response of the Left would seem clear. Drawing upon the relatively autonomous cultural power of Holocaust symbolism, it could challenge the social instantiations upon which right-wing deployments of the narrative rest. Building upon the peace movement, it could broaden solidarity by identifying the Palestinians as the victims of a Holocaust-like disaster themselves. Post-Zionist scholars have

certainly deconstructed the once widely accepted causal relationship between the Holocaust and the establishment of Israel. They have challenged the Zionist founders' claim that the establishment of Israel was the only possible response to the Holocaust and the only feasible solution to the anti-Semitism of the Diaspora. While these radical arguments have not been universally accepted among critical Israelis, they reveal the widespread identification of the Israeli Left with the suffering of the Palestinians. The authors concluded that according to the Israeli Right, to recognize the rights of Palestinians is to become an enemy of the Jewish people. Solidarity cannot extend beyond the boundaries of one's own group. It must be primordial, not civil. So reconstructed, the trauma drama of the Holocaust is a recipe for conflict without end. If this view should prevail, it would not only be severely destabilizing in geo-political terms. It would assault the universalizing moral principles that the memory of the Holocaust calls upon us to sustain.

Ron Eyerman (Yale University) and **Dominik Bartmanski** (PhD Candidate, Yale University), in their paper "**The Cultural Trauma of Katyn Massacre**" analyzed the murder of approximately 14,500 prominent Poles by the Soviet secret police (NKVD) in the early spring of 1940. While the victims were actually held in three different prisoner of war camps, the first mass graves were uncovered by the advancing German army in 1943 in the Katyn forest in Ukraine and the incident is now commonly associated with this place.

Eyerman and Bartmanski pointed out that the massacre was from the very beginning encased in political conflict. The story of Katyn is one of silencing & suppressed memory. It took

years to establish historical facts and to narrate them in a coherent and meaningful way. One reason, according to the authors, was the concerted attempts made by the wartime governments in the US and Great Britain to silence any public discussion in the fear of alienating their Soviet ally, as well as the systematic attempts by the latter to cover up the facts. Consequently, from 1945 until 1989 the Katyn massacre could not be introduced to the Polish domestic public sphere. That was only possible among the Polish diaspora in France, England and the US. The publicized trauma narrative of Polish emigrants and exiles was fueled by their own private memories and the existential anxiety and pain of the relatives of those killed who remained in Poland.

Eyerman and Bartmanski added that for those Poles who knew the facts as established in 1943, and remembered thereafter, this was a dramatic period not only because of the traumatizing potential of the knowledge they initially had to face and keep, but also because before 1989, this knowledge was suppressed for decades, while its carriers were systematically persecuted, threatened or socially marginalized, and a false account of events was disseminated from the outset of People's Republic of Poland. The authors suggested three sources for the maintenance of the memory of Katyn: the Polish military, the families and friends of the victims and the émigré Polish communities. Furthermore, they distinguished three crucial carrier groups (survivors, relatives and intellectuals & politicians) who sustained the trauma narrative. The authors posed the question: "How exactly is it witnessed-based remembering conveyed and translated to the collective level and subsequently

transformed into social remembrance?" Their study stressed the role of discursive frames & visual representations predicated upon a specific set of cultural binaries that in turn are intertwined with emotional attachments. The authors concluded that the case of cultural trauma of Katyn starts with the fundamental problem of sheer knowledge of facts. The very awareness of occurrences was for a long time partial and what was known was either suppressed or framed in a way that made the story controversial. The specificity of the case forced them to ask new general questions about the relation between such categories as knowledge, awareness, memory, commemoration, remembrance & media.

Elizabeth Butler Breese (Yale University) in her "**Claiming Trauma through Social Performance: The Case of *Waiting for Godot***" focused on the importance of social performance to show that attendant audience can experience the construction of the cultural trauma. This study explored different types of claims to trauma as well as different measures of success in order to evaluate how and why trauma processes begin or fail. Carrier groups and social actors, for instance, make different kinds of claims in the trauma process.

Two specific performances of *Waiting for Godot* are used to articulate the full argument: the first was staged in November 2007 in New Orleans after the huge and incomparable destructions of the Hurricane Katrina, while the second was Susan Sontag's production of the play staged in Sarajevo during the siege of 1993. The staging of the play in these locations were social performances as well as theatrical performances. As Elizabeth Butler Breese claims, we must remain

theoretically vigilant that it is not the events which are traumatic but it is our construction of occurrences as traumatic to cultural structures and expectations that make them so. She also contends that collective trauma remains an important sociological concept for understanding when and how communities and collectives experience events as traumatic. In that, she looks trauma theory closer regarding both mood and meaning.

Nicolas Demertzis (University of Athens, Greece), in his '**The drama of the Greek civil war trauma**' explored the experiences and memories of the generation that lived through the Greek Civil War. These spill over to the next generation because the war was a cultural trauma that affected society and the body polity for decades. Demertzis combined material from past historical, sociological and ethnographic research with in depth interviews. He noted that it has not been easy to research on the Greek civil war; for several decades scholars were reluctant to deal with it due to inaccessible archives and hostile political climate.

The Greek Civil War was Europe's bloodiest military conflict between 1945 and the post-1989 collapse of Yugoslavia. It sprang out of a host of socio-historical and political cultural roots. Demertzis contended that up to a point the causes of the Civil War stem also from the dissolution of Greek society during the Occupation and the antagonisms, animosities and hostilities it gave rise to. Acts of resistance became frequent from the winter of 1941 by EAM (National Liberation Front), the major organization of the Left and the communists. Other organizations such as EDES (National Republican Greek League), initially of liberal tendencies, soon assumed an anti-communist orientation. Resistance

to occupation then failed from the start to act in unison.

According to the author, the fundamental elements of the cultural trauma theory are: memory, emotion and identity. As a total social event, the Civil War has been experienced as a cultural-social trauma because it affected collective memories, group consciousness, and the organizational principles of the Greek society. It was not only caused by two almost mutually exclusive worlds; but also created two opposed worlds. For 25 years the most overwhelming consequence of the Civil War was the cleavage between the so-called national mindful and the defeated Left. This cleavage permeated not only the political realm but every single social, economic and cultural arena. In the 1960s, when Greece's parliamentary democracy seemed to get consolidated, the traumatic cleavage of the Civil War was enhanced by the military dictatorship (1967-74). Only after 1974 was democracy restored, the Communist Party legalized, and all civil rights reinstated.

A divided collective memory emerged not only alongside the binary opposition between Left and Right but in accordance to local animosities and struggles amidst which frequently the roles of victims and perpetrators were mixed and interchanged. The main reason that this cultural trauma's repercussions are felt after so many years is the partial failure of the politics of oblivion pursued by both sides (silence, "nationalization" of the Resistance, forgetting, manipulated public memory). Unlike other countries, in Greece, a systematic reappraisal and a coming to terms with the past has not been generated. As a result, despite the claims of national reconciliation, the issue of forgiving has not been raised seriously as yet. Forgiveness is crucial

because a consistent concept of trauma as a living metaphor refers to a dynamic process which includes both the traumatic element itself and the process of its healing. Forgiveness is part of the healing, an integral element of mourning.

In her **"Revolutionary Trauma and Representation of the War: the Case of China in Mao's Era," Rui Gao** (Yale University) argued that for millions of Chinese who lived during the War of Resistance Against Japan (1937-1945), their personal experience must have been unbearably traumatic and painful. During the war, China lost three million lives in combat, and the civilian casualties is estimated to be about twenty million. Such massively shared suffering and injustice, however, remained ultimately private: for years after the building of the new state, it seldom if ever, found its way into the public sphere of expression. Why is this case? Even widely shared suffering and injustice of enormous scale are not collectively traumatic in themselves, so Gao argued that the horrendous misery and mass destruction brought by the war was never able to be translated into a cultural trauma. Moreover, not only has there not been a successful trauma process occurring but the significance of the war was largely diminished by the triumph of other cultural traumas that had been powerfully constructed.

Gao presented the grand narrative constructed in Mao's era & argued that the new national collective was built through the successful construction of a cultural trauma: That was the trauma of the old society, when all evil forces joined to inflict injury and pain upon the Chinese people. At the core of this "grand" collective trauma lay the trauma-drama of class struggle, in which the evil perpetrators

of the old society were represented as the absolute evil of class enemy.

Tracing the representation of the war in the public sphere of Mao's China and analyzing its relation with the grand narrative, she argued that the depiction and interpretation of the war was determined by the intrinsic logic and strength of the compelling grand narrative. In the hugely successful reconstruction of the grand narrative of revolution, representation of the war was a less relevant chapter, because of the challenge it posed to the communist trauma of class struggle and the collective identity the latter so powerfully fostered.

Gao argued that a collective trauma of the old society and class struggle was successfully constructed. Several elements contributed to the solidification of the trauma. Through the construction of a grand narrative, through the reproduction of the trauma drama in texts and in rituals, the bitterness and darkness that characterized the old society was being consciously revisited and relived. This perpetual recreation formed the solid foundation upon which the legitimacy of the new nation was built, and facilitated the construction of a national collective through a spiritual catharsis that can only be experienced via a narrow yet sacred salvation from an otherwise extremely traumatic fate. Gao concluded that the narration of the War was the perfect embodiment of "revolutionary heroism" and "revolutionary romanticism" and served as a masterpiece chapter in the grand ascending narrative about the founding of the new nation. With the heroic construction of the protagonist that inherently denies victimhood, such a narrative intrinsically preempts the emergence of a traumatic representation of War.

In their case study "**A fire That Doesn't Burn? The Allied Bombing of Germany and the Cultural Politics of Trauma**," Volker Heins (Frankfurt University) and Andreas Langenohl (Justus-Liebig University) focused on an instance of collective suffering—the Allied bombing of German cities during World War II—that has not become a cultural trauma, not even among the successor generations of the victim group.

Heins and Langenohl agreed with Alexander's and Eyerman's point that cultural trauma, no matter how horrible, does not directly flow from historical occurrences. Rather, cultural trauma is socially constructed through narratives and other forms of representation. So, the authors gave a short overview of the remembrance of the air war in post-war Germany. They rejected the widespread claim that the memories of German victims were actively silenced. Instead, they sketched out the memory matrix that constrained the mnemonic practices of remembrance of the *Bombenkrieg*.

Then, they turned to three case vignettes to shed light on the reasons why the bombings have not been interpreted as cultural trauma. First, they highlighted the case of Hamburg, which was hit the hardest by British bombers in 1943. More specifically, they were interested in how the rise of the Holocaust trauma rendered the remembrance of the firebombing of Hamburg more complex, inconsistent and ultimately non-traumatic. Second, they looked at attempts to draw analogies between the high-altitude bombing of German cities and the bombing of other places, in particular Baghdad in the second Gulf War (1990-91). This analogy allowed sections of the German public to mourn the victims of American bombs without explicitly

reactivating nationalist or revisionist notions of German victimhood. Third, they briefly explored the memory and commemoration of the 1945 bombings of Dresden, in which neo-Nazi extremists, who would like to redefine the memory of the bombings as the new cultural trauma of post-reunification Germany, play a major role.

In their final section they summarized the reasons why such memory projects are unlikely to succeed anytime soon. There is no question that these occurrences have been traumatic in the clinical and psychological sense of the term. Still, memory projects attempting to translate this original experience into a cultural trauma have failed. The remembrance of the destruction of Hamburg, Dresden and many other German cities and towns does not point to an underlying cultural trauma that fundamentally shapes the collective identity of modern-day Germans. Rather, the memory of the bombing war is a function of another memory: the memory of Germany's wartime atrocities including the Holocaust.

This does not mean that Holocaust memory has "repressed" that of the air war. Rather, the meaning of the bombing war cannot be established independently from memory discourses on the crimes of Nazi Germany. The public discourse on the bombings is not about the obvious fact that Germans, too, have been victims of the war; it is rather about whether they deserve a place in the sun of virtuous victimhood which would rule out that they have been perpetrators or accomplices to evil as well. Not the memory of the air war, but the memory of the Holocaust is a cultural trauma for Germans. This in turn constrains and conditions present and future memory projects. The memory matrix of the bombings is thus

organized around a reference point external to the debate over the bombings. Political struggles over the public commemoration of the bombing victims, including all the historically incomprehensible analogies between "Dresden" and "Baghdad," always take place in the shadow of the Holocaust as the negative foundational myth of contemporary Germany.

In his '**Traumatic Memory in Generational Perspective**' **Radim Marada** (Masaryk University) examined the relationship between generations and memory in the context of post-communist Eastern European. He did so by adding the historically recent example of post-communist memorizing of communism to the cases of the Holocaust, the American slavery and the German Nazism, around which the debate has particularly evolved; and by focusing systematically on the generational aspect. He defended the analytical value of the concept of cultural trauma, both theoretically and with the help of the empirical example of memory of communism in the Czech Republic. He showed how memories and past experience acquire traumatic nature within the context of a generational discourse of guilt. Marada especially accentuated two features of traumatic memory: ambivalence and silence.

Marada contended that an event or an experience is not traumatic in itself. It is the uneasy memory of it that makes it traumatic. Just as individual trauma comes with a biographically shattered self-esteem and self-understanding, collective trauma relates to the historically wounded identity of a collectivity. He pointed out that one's own generational feeling is only acknowledged in encounters, physical or ideational, with representatives of a different generation inhabiting the same

historical region. It is not just a particular historical experience that makes a generation out of an age cohort. It is the manner in which this experience is absorbed, understood, and represented differently than the manner in which other generations understand and represent this same collective experience. Generational conflict – and generations alone, for that matter – can only emerge if individuals identify with others not only along the same-age line, but also with those who are generational different, with their predecessors, and their ancestors.

Communism is, compared to the other cases, a more recent historical “event” – but one which has already been subject to conflicting public interpretations and discursive struggles in the post-communist countries. It is the vivid and publicly contested memory of the communist past, shattering common national identities and peculiarly dividing national communities in the post-communist countries, which signifies presence of the trauma process.

Marada referred to the youth as an important feature of post-communist environment. Young people took an important part in triggering the processes that eventually led to the old regime’s collapse. According to the author, formative classification struggles (like the labels of *revolutionary* and *normalized* generations in Czechoslovakia) often occur under the disguise of other sorts of social and political struggles, and almost always in persistent negotiations to join the side one wants to represent and seeks to belong to. In these struggles, generational divisions find their dramatic articulation, so that they can serve as a cultural label of belonging to the people of today (or the future) or to the people of yesterday.

The young people of the late 1980s could perhaps still understand their parents, who entered the Party during the 1970s or earlier. But they were sorry for them, rather, since the parents had made this concession in order to keep life chances of their children open, without the offspring seeing any noteworthy point in such a sacrifice. In the 1970s and the early 1980s, silence was still being understood. By the end of the 1980s, it started to be driven by futility, rather than understanding.

Marada closed his presentation by saying that a direct historical experience acquires traumatic nature when it becomes difficult to communicate this experience across generations because of its enormous complexity, at least in the eyes of those concerned. The bearers of such experience easily convince themselves that those who did not live in their past, can never fully understand it. If there is any reason to apologize at all for their past misdeeds, there is nobody around to apologize to. The guilt is too general, and the young would have been the same had they lived in the same time – just another excuse.

In their paper, **Victor Roudometof** (University of Cyprus) and **Miranda Christou** (University of Cyprus) explained how the 1974 Turkish invasion became a cultural trauma for all Greek Cypriots through its commemoration, institutionalization and routinization.

The authors contended that the two major characteristics of the “1974” cultural trauma are: the experience of uprootedness and the vision of a mythical day of return. The longing for the day of return functions as a response to the suffering caused by the sudden uprooting and maintains a positive vision for the future. In their paper,

Roudometof and Christou showed how everyday rituals are evocative of the trauma and how they echo and reproduce the trauma in Greek Cypriot Culture. In a multitude of sites that range from official ones – such the Republic of Cyprus’ educational system or state legislation– to unofficial ones – such as the refugee associations and kinship groups – the trauma of 1974 has been constructed not as a historical event but as a present day trauma that derives its urgency from an unresolved political problem.

The Greek Cypriot educational system has significantly contributed to the ritualization and routinization of “1974” through the cross-curricular goal of the “I don’t forget” slogan-objective. The presence of the ‘I don’t forget’ logo in schools complements a cross-course educational goal of transferring the traumatic memory of “1974” to the new generation. The trauma of 1974 is evoked not only in the commemoration of the day of the 1974 invasion; a day that is commemorated by Greek Cypriot authorities as a sad anniversary and by Turkish Cypriot authorities as a day of deliverance, complete with a military parade and with the participation of state dignitaries from mainland Turkey. Rather, the presence of the 1974 trauma is strong and colors all anniversaries as such.

The cultural trauma of 1974 can further be identified in everyday rituals that attempt to symbolically reconstruct the lost home in the context of temporary refugee housing. Furthermore, the post-1974 designation and institutionalization of the refugee label has created the conditions for the universalization of the refugees’ loss and the possibility that all Greek Cypriots could identify with the pain of uprootedness. Roudometof and Christou

concluded by arguing that the emotional burden of the cultural trauma for Greek Cypriots is so extensive that it raises the community’s expectations of what would constitute an acceptable solution to island’s political troubles.

Ivana Spasić (University of Belgrade) in her paper “**The trauma of Kosovo in Serbian narratives**”, analyzed the memory of the Battle of Kosovo, fought between the Serbian army and the forces of Ottoman Turks in 1389. The Battle is presented as formative of the very essence of being a Serb. Spasić was primarily interested in how this claim has come to look so self-evident. “Kosovo” in Serbian national narratives is not a story of a thing, a place, or an event but, more than anything else, a story about stories.

Spasić examined two sets of statements that purport to explain the link between Serbs and Kosovo. The first view Serbs as a nation decisively defined by the traumatic but ennobling memory of the Battle of Kosovo. The second group represents a view that is in many respects the polar opposite of the first. It is highly critical of Serbs. They are depicted as a power-hungry nation prone to aggression against their weaker neighbours. This is the “denouncing discourse”. Spasić showed that the two discourses share more than would be expected.

Their common ground includes the following: First, they believe that the collective remembrance of the Battle of Kosovo is indelibly imprinted on the Serbian mind. On both sides the Kosovo Myth is construed as the Serbian Trauma. Second, they are both currently hegemonic in their respective areas of influence.

In Spasić’s analysis, the twin accounts presented above were used as a foil against which to test new openings. Spasić took a closer look at

how they were constructed and how they are still being constructed. She sought to de-ontologize the Kosovo Trauma, or to de-traumatize Kosovo symbolism. Spasić was convinced that Serbs are not so much different from other nations as they would sometimes like to think of themselves or as they are frequently portrayed by outsiders.

The author's intention was to explore the strategically important ambiguities, gaps, loops, nesting implications, loose ends, double-entendres, misunderstandings etc. It is such discursive plays which are mainly responsible for the Myth's enduring power. Spasić traced how the Myth, its form finalized in the early 19th century, operated within a number of vastly different ideological-political programs in modern Serbian and Yugoslav history. Next, she tried to tease out the Myth's strategic ambivalences and the ways in which it is continuously discursively reproduced in specific instances. Then she referred to the official and vernacular interpretations in the most recent period, to conclude with some general implications.

The period after 2000 has been characterized by a series of new twists and turns on the Kosovo theme. After the war of 1999 and instalment of international administration in (real) Kosovo, its status has remained unresolved. While the unofficial, more personalized and private discourse was open-minded, the discourse produced by political elites sought the re-traumatization of Kosovo. It thus has become all but impossible to talk about Kosovo, real as well as symbolic, in anything but the most elevated tone.

Carlo Tognato (National University of Colombia) began his paper **“Solidarizing with the kidnap victims: On the generalization of trauma across a fragmented civil**

sphere,” by explaining that Colombia has been plagued by one of the longest civil conflicts in the world. The two guerrilla movements (the FARC and the ELN) that are still fighting have been around for nearly 50 years. They are two of the oldest guerrilla movements known worldwide. Over the past decades different governments in Colombia have initiated peace talks with different groups of illegal combatants. Some have been successful as they have led to the total demobilization of the groups involved, and have managed to reincorporate their members into civilian life and democratic politics. In the case of the FARC and the ELN, however, all contacts have been unfruitful. In the course of the 1990s the conflict between these two groups and the state became increasingly gruesome and in the aftermath of 9/11 the two guerrilla groups were reclassified by the European Union and the US State Department as terrorist organizations. One of the weapons such groups have used over the years in part to pressure the Colombian government and in part to finance their illegal operations has been the kidnapping of thousands of people.

At the end of 2007 their suffering moved international audiences as some of the kidnap victims made a ghostly appearance in a FARC video circulated to prove their “survival.” Traditionally, Colombian society has not regarded kidnapping as a national trauma. Instead, different segments of society have read it differently depending on their political sympathies. Since 2007, however, kidnapping has slowly appeared to be on its way to be coded as a generalized trauma. The author suggested that addressing the generalization of trauma across a fragmented civil sphere can be

particularly fruitful in terms of theory-building.

In his paper Tognato suggested that the generalization of the trauma of the kidnap victims in Colombia shows that multi-vocal performances along the fault line that breaks the Colombian civil sphere into distinct zones. He argued that this finding may contribute to extend Alexander's theory of the civil sphere and, by implication, his theory of cultural trauma.

Akiko Hashimoto (University of Pittsburgh) in her paper **“Narrating Cultural Trauma of Defeat in Postwar Japan”** contended that over the decades the narratives of the national trauma of war and defeat in Japan have coalesced into two broad directions suggested by cultural trauma theory. On the one hand, a *progressive narrative* is recognizable in the “bedrock of peace” discourse (*heiwa no ishizue*). In this discourse, defeat is the reason why Japan enjoys peace and prosperity today. Hashimoto said that this “fortunate fall” argument is used in speeches and commemorations, justifying and legitimating the sacrifices of the war dead, while at the same time, diverting attention away from the culpability of the State in starting and losing the war. As long as soldiers' and civilians' sacrifices are emphasized, the narrative frame is elastic enough to allow the war itself to be either condemned or ennobled.

On the other hand, Hashimoto argued that the *tragic narrative* represents identification with suffering victims. In this narrative, the war was a tragedy: The scale of violence and destruction is undisputable, and the only appropriate response as a nation is to make sure it will not happen again. Thus, those affected by this tragedy are duty bound to recount, warn, and prevent repeating the mistake. The war

was wrong, but there is also sufficient elasticity here in assigning the blame to different agents and causes – ranging from the Emperor to colonial aggression to military strategists and self-serving Western powers. This narrative is often recognized as the “ravages of war” discourse (*senso no sanku*) that sets a premium on Japan's victimization in Hiroshima, Nagasaki, and indiscriminate air raids, and tends to cast war as an absolute evil. These narratives have helped to normalize the national trauma and over time they have infused the Japanese identity with strong anti-war sentiments. These narratives have helped legitimate the sentiments of the “peaceful nation” discourse (*heiwa kokka*) that is based on Article 9 (the constitutional clause on the renunciation of war), and have served as a common platform for the nation.

Hashimoto added that cultural trauma theory, by articulating the structure of discursive systems that emerge to normalize the cultural trauma in collective life, helps capture the complexity inherent in Japan's national experience that is not explained by the reductionistic, one-dimensional analyses.

Finally, **Ari Sitas** (University of Cape Town, South Africa) presented his paper **“The unassimilable alterities of a continent- African intellectuals and cultural traumas.”** He argued that Africa's experience of violent change and transformation demands some modulation of the original conception of the project. The emergence of the African Union (with a stronger mandate than the Organization of African Unity) is a means of moving beyond the contours of existing cultural traumas. A theory of cultural trauma is timely to work towards reconciliation across historic fault-lines.

Sitas argued that to speak of “carriers” on the African continent is to speak of a cadre of educated intellectuals. He argued that we are living through a “re-construction” of “re-working” of the original cultural trauma that defined the continent’s entanglement in an emerging world system of socio-economic and political relations. He further contended that these “re-constructions” are very immediate as African intellectuals are living through an intense period which involves a crisis within “carrier groups” as such and their capacities to construct new meanings.

Sitas referred to the UN-sponsored Durban Conference on Racism as a clear instance of this “re-construction.” Whereas Apartheid was seen as a crime against humanity and morally indefensible, colonialism or slavery were seen as transitory and perhaps necessary historical mistakes. No responsibility for the enduring effects of colonialism or of slavery was ready to be entertained. Apartheid was the responsibility of South African

whites who had already conceded their culpability. That is, the construction of a “cultural trauma” around South Africa is akin to prior constructions of colonialism as an abomination.

The principal reason for this is that African constructions of ethno-nationalist movements have at the core of their collective traumas the experience of racism, slavery and colonialism. But each one of these provides highly problematic terrains for attempts to construct an upbeat narrative of freedom and progress. Sitas posed the question: How can African traumas stop being considered as passing “instances” on the road to progress and/or fascinating and fascinating case-studies? He argued that what is currently being re-negotiated or re-constructed is the slavery-racism-colonialism-Africa-trauma nexus by a new generation of contemporary carriers.

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TG02 Programme

XVII World Congress of Sociology

11-17 July 2010, Gothenburg Sweden

Programme Title:

Multiple Modernities, Civilizational Analysis and Historical Sociology

Programme Coordinator:

Willfried Spohn (University of Goettingen/Free University of Berlin)

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Abstracts should be submitted to the programme coordinator and the session chairs. The deadline for submission is October 30, 2009. Any individual may participate on up two

sessions. Once your presentation is approved by the session chair, you must then submit an abstract of your paper on-line (instructions will be made available in due course). Abstracts are only accepted by the system from those who are already registered for the Congress. The deadline for submission of approved abstracts is May 1, 2010.

Sessions

1. Inter-civilizational configurations and encounters – towards a historical sociology of globalization

Chair: Victor Roudometof, University of Cyprus
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This session will address the multiple historical dimensions of globalization. It will focus on the growing connectivity among world regions as manifested in the *longue-durée* of world history. Of particular importance are the inter-civilizational constellations that have emerged as a result of the growing contacts among civilizational traditions in the Euro-Asian continent during the pre-1492 periods as well as those between old civilizations of East and South Asia and the historically recent civilizations in Western Euro-Asia. Of equal importance are also the encounters between Westerners and non-Westerners in the post-1492 period. Colonialism, post-colonialism and inter-cultural relations are all included within the rubric of an emerging historical sociology of globalization. Among the key themes for the session are the following: the role of inter-civilizational encounters for the articulation of multiple modernities in different world regions; the inter-play between religious traditions and the accentuation of cultural difference; the interrelations between structural and cultural dimension in inter-civilizational encounters and constellations; the commonalities and differences of inter-civilizational encounters in different periods of globalization; as well as the relationship between the multiple modernities perspective on, civilizational approaches to and historical-comparative analyses of globalization.

2. Civilizational analysis and historical sociology – convergent or divergent approaches and perspectives?

Chairs: Johann Arnason, Charles University Prague and
Willfried Spohn, University of Goettingen
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Historical and comparative sociology has primarily developed in criticizing macro-sociological theories and analyses of modernization and social change by focusing on the social, political and cultural meso- and micro-foundations of path-dependent trajectories. Civilizational analysis in criticizing the Euro-centric and nation-state focus of sociological approaches to modernization and social change and related to the multiple modernities perspective has concentrated on civilizational complexes and constellations beyond the nation-state in terms of world religions and political empires. In such a characterization, historical-sociological and civilizational approaches seem to diverge. At the same time, there are also convergent links, particularly between macro-historical approaches that include culture or ideology and civilizational approaches that include economic and political power relations. The session intends to bring both approaches together and discuss their theoretical, methodological and analytical

commonalities and differences. Topics of the contributions may range from varieties of capitalism and economic cultures, state formation and democratization, social movements and revolutions, nation-building and ethnic-national relations as well as cultures, religions and inter-civilizational encounters.

3. Peripheral modernities and multiple inequalities – theoretical and comparative perspectives

Chair: Manuela Boatcă, Catholic University of Eichstaett-Ingolstadt
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Approaches building on or explicitly departing from the multiple modernities perspective have increasingly stressed the fact that the mere pluralization of modernities is an insufficient corrective of conventional sociological views of modernization and the modern. In particular, the multiple modernities perspective is seen as paying too little attention to the historical bonds linking the various geopolitical spaces credited with their own model of modernity, as well as to the structural hierarchies among the modernities thus produced. In turn, theories of “entangled”, “subaltern”, and “peripheral modernities” in different ways and to different degrees address the connectedness and the asymmetric power relations between modernities, while stressing the legacy of colonialism and slavery alongside economic, political, and epistemic dependence in peripheral and ex-colonial contexts. They are thus closer to world-systemic analyses of global inequality structures and postcolonial approaches drawing on Latin American dependency theory or Indian Subaltern Studies than to conventional theories of inequality and social change. The session will therefore focus on the relationship between peripheral/subaltern modernities and the emergence of inequality structures that differ from those in core/dominant modernities, as well as on the impact of such differing structures on global inequality patterns. Contributions dealing with processes of race and ethnicity formation in Western and non-Western areas, global and regional class structures, and gender regimes in historical and/or comparative perspective are welcome.

4. Europeanization between globalization, nation-states and citizens – civilizational and historical-sociological perspectives

Chair: Willfried Spohn, University of Goettingen
(willfried.spohn@sowi.uni-goettingen.de)

Europeanization in the double sense of the development of a trans-national multi-level regime on the basis of a growing number of member states, on the one hand, and the impacts of enlarging European integration on European societies, on the other, is often conceived as an internal European process. However, the double process of Europeanization is also dependent on the historical foundations, constructions and reconstructions of the European civilization; the development of inter-civilizational encounters in an emerging world order; as well as their contemporary transformations in a globalizing world. The session invites contributions to the multi-dimensional, socio-economic, political-legal and cultural-cognitive relationships between Europeanization and globalization. The contributions may range from political economy and economic sociology to political sociology and international relations, inter-disciplinary approaches to international migration and citizenship as well as the

cultural and historical sciences. But the contributions should particularly focus on inter-civilizational constellations and global conditions in a historical-comparative sociological perspective.

5. Global Economic Crisis, Varieties of Capitalism and Social Inequality – Theoretical, historical and comparative perspectives (*Joint session TG02 and RC09*)

Chairs: Willfried Spohn, University of Goettingen

Ulrike Schuerkens, École des Hautes Études des Sciences Sociales, Paris

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The current global financial and economic crisis has crucial consequences for world capitalism, economic globalization, economic core-periphery relations and the varieties of capitalism in the Global North as well as the Global South. This joint session intends to analyze and discuss the sociological consequences of the current world crisis on national and transnational social inequality, industrial relations, labour systems and unemployment in theoretical, historical and comparative perspectives. On the theoretical plane, it is of special interest to discuss the relations between economic globalization and national/transnational forms of social inequality, in particular as related to class, gender, race, and ethnicity. On the historical-sociological plane, the major focus concentrates on a comparison between the sociological consequences of the Great Depression 1929-32 and the current global economic crisis. And on the comparative level, the contributions focus on the sociological consequences of the current crisis for the varieties of core and peripheral societies and regions as well as changing relations between them. Macro- and micro-sociological contributions are welcome.

Members' New Publications

Schuerkens, Ulrike. *Geschichte Afrikas: Eine Einführung.* UTB-Böhlau, Köln, Weimar, VII-298 pp.

The book covers the history of Africa from the beginnings until the 21st century by using the latest historical research results. The first part of the book discusses three large topics: economy, culture, and religion in order to introduce the reader into some general problems of the African continent. The second part of the book begins with a short overview of early Prehistory (Stone Age), the later Prehistory and Ancient History (Ancient Egypt, Early Christianity, Later Stone Age). After that, U. Schuerkens presents the later Iron Age until the end of the 18th century in different African regions (Central Africa, South Africa, East Africa, Northern Africa and West Africa). The beginning of the European imperialism with phenomena such as slavery, commerce, and missions is then tackled. The Conference of Berlin from 1884 to 1885 and the partition of Africa will lead the reader to colonialism. The author tackles topics such as colonial administration, commerce, labor, mining, agriculture, religion. Then, the history of the modern States is presented and, in a last chapter, postcolonial Africa is covered extensively. Topics such as International Cooperation, Non-Governmental Organizations, civil wars, military regimes, debt regime, endemic diseases,

globalization, legal problems, refugees, and development are discussed. Moreover, historical sources on Africa are discussed in a separate chapter at the beginning of the book. The aim of the book is to present long-term historical and cultural processes of the entire African continent so that recent global and local developments of the continent can be understood according to their complex interrelationship and recent historical research. The language of the book is adapted to the general public (students and the wider interested public) and avoids too specialized scientific language.

Roudometof, Victor (Ed.) “Negotiating Church – State Relations in Cyprus”/ Evolution des relations entre Eglise et Etat a Chypre. Special Issue of Social Compass, Volume 56 Issue 1, pp. 5-83.

This is the first time ever that the study of religion in Cyprus has been featured in a major international publication. The special issue consists of an introduction to the problematic of Church-State relations followed by individual articles that address all the religious communities of the island (Orthodox, Muslim, Maronite, Armenian, and Catholic). The articles cover a variety of topics, ranging from the adjustment of the Orthodox Church of Cyprus to the post-1878 reality of British colonialism, to comparative statistical analyses of religious attitudes among Greek and Turkish Cypriots (based on data from the World Values Survey), to the significance of religion for Turkish Cypriots and the extent to which the island’s smaller religious groups have been able to operate in an environment of religious pluralism.

Roudometof, Victor “Orthodoxy and Modernity in Cyprus: The 2006 Archiepiscopal Elections in Historical Perspective,” Journal of Contemporary Religion 2009 (Vol. 24) Issue 2, pp. 189-204.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

New Book Series: *Social Theory and Global Studies* at Suny State University; New York

Said Arjomand (Suny University New York) has started a new book series on *Social Theory and Global Studies* and he invites manuscripts – either monographs or editions. Willfried Spohn & Andreas Langenohl (University of Constance) are preparing a book under the working title “*World society, multiple modernities and historical sociology*” based on the presentations from our TG02 sessions in Budapest and Barcelona 2008 on these topics and will submit this book proposal to the Suny book series. Other proposals are welcome.

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